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ABSTRACT

Private schools constitute 25 percent of all elementary and secondary schools, while enrollment in private schools is 12 percent of the total elementary and secondary school enrollment. These are some findings from the 1985-86 Private School Study, based on a sample survey conducted by Westat, Inc., under contract to the Center for Education Statistics. The study was a multistage probability sample of private schools across the United States done in conjunction with a survey of library and media centers. The first stage was the sampling of 75 areas, consisting of counties or groups of contiguous counties; the second stage was the selection of schools within the sampled areas; and the third and final stage was the sampling of teachers within the sampled schools. A total of 1,174 school questionnaires were obtained from the 1,387 schools within the scope of the survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 85 percent. Among the data collected in the survey were religious orientation, enrollment size, number of teachers, years of operation, percent minority enrollment, and tuition. These characteristics are described, and differences found among private schools are presented. Six tables are appended. (MLF)

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Status Of Private Elementary And Secondary Schools, 1985-86

Private schools constitute 25 percent of all elementary and secondary schools, while enrollment in private schools is 12 percent of the total elementary and secondary school enrollment. An estimated 5.6 million students attended the Nation's estimated 28,000 private elementary and secondary schools in 1985-86. These are some findings from the 1985-86 Private School Study, based on a sample survey, funded by the Center for Education Statistics (CES).[1]

Survey Background

Until 1983-84, surveys of private schools resulted in an undercount because all national lists of private schools were incomplete: many small, independent private schools did not appear on any list. One of the goals of the 1983-84 National Survey of Private Schools was to determine the number of schools that had not been included on the CES list of private schools. This was accomplished by intensively searching and constructing a much more complete list of private schools for a sample of areas. The 1983-84 survey discovered that approximately 6,000 private schools nationwide had not been included on the CES list.

To be included in the 1983-84 or 1985-86 study, a school had to meet the following criteria: be privately administered, offer instruction at first grade level or above, require attendance at least 4 hours per day and at least 160 days per year, and not be located in a private home used as a residence. Consequently, schools providing only kindergarten or pre-kindergarten instruction were not included in either study.

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[1] This study was conducted by Westat, Inc., under contract to the Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

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CS 87-340B

The sample for the 1985-86 survey was selected from the list constructed in the sample areas in 1983-84. The lists for these areas were not updated before the 1985-86 sample was drawn; therefore, the 1985-86 survey did not include private schools that came into existence after 1983-84.

Estimates of the change in the number of private schools and their enrollment between 1983-84 and 1985-86 were computed based upon the assumption that the changes were similar to those experienced between 1980-81 and 1983-84. The estimates in tables 1 and 2 have been adjusted for these assumed changes. All of the other tables contain national estimates that have not been adjusted for the schools that came into existence after 1983-84.

Tables 1 and 2 also differ from all the other tables in this report in the method used to estimate the number of pupils in private schools. A ratio estimation procedure was used to produce all the national estimates. This method produces more precise estimates than would otherwise be available. The ratio used was based upon the number of private schools. In tables 1 and 2 only, a different ratio (one based on enrollment) was used to estimate the number of private school pupils in 1985-86. Both estimates of enrollment are subject to sampling variability, but the enrollment-based ratio is expected to be more precise for enrollment statistics. The school and enrollment ratios operate differently because the sample of areas chosen happened, by chance, to have fewer schools but larger enrollments than the national averages.

Since there are two different adjustments in tables 1 and 2, it may help to understand the magnitude of each adjustment separately. First of all, the differences in the number of schools between table 1 (28,000) and table 3 (25,600) is entirely due to the estimated number of new schools, because both estimates used the same ratio estimator. On the other hand, the differences in enrollment statistics in these tables (5.6 million and 6.0 million) are largely due to the different estimators. The enrollment ratio estimator yields statistics about 10 percent below the school ratio estimator for enrollment statistics. The enrollment in new schools is about 3 percent of the total. Together these adjustments produce the difference of about 7 percent between tables 1 and 3.

The estimates in tables 1 and 2 differ from all the other tables for these two reasons. The estimates in the other tables were not subjected to the same adjustments in order to reduce the confusion in estimation methods for users of the data file. It should be noted that both methods result in nearly identical estimates of percents and means, which are the major focus of this report and the other analyses from the 1985-86 Private School Study.

Private Schools in 1985-86 Compared with 1983-84

Overall, the number of private schools and enrollment in private schools has remained fairly stable since 1983-84:

- 28,000 schools in 1985-86 compared with 27,700 in 1983-84 and
- 5.6 million students in 1985-86 compared with 5.7 million in 1983-84 (table 1).

Table 1 also presents data on schools and enrollments for the 2 years, by religious orientation and instructional level[2] of the schools. Although it may seem that differences occurred, none of the differences are statistically significant.

Comparison of Public and Private Schools

Of the estimated 110,300 elementary and secondary schools in the Nation in 1985-86, 28,000 (25 percent) were private, and 82,400 (75 percent) were public. Private schools served 5.6 million students, 12 percent of the total of 45.1 million (table 2).

The organizational patterns of private and public schools differed considerably. For example, 26 percent of public schools were secondary schools, compared with only 9 percent of private schools. A larger proportion of private schools, however, combined elementary and secondary grades (20 percent), or were other specialized schools (12 percent); in contrast, only 2 percent of public schools had combined elementary and secondary grades, and 3 percent were specialized.

Some Characteristics of Private Schools

Among the data collected in the 1985-86 survey were religious orientation, enrollment size, number of teachers, years of operation, percent minority enrollment, and tuition. These characteristics are described below, and differences found among private schools are presented. As mentioned earlier, all estimates discussed throughout the rest of this report were produced using the ratio estimator based on number of schools and have not been adjusted for assumed new schools.

Religious Orientation

The vast majority (81 percent) of private schools were affiliated with an organized religious group or reported a religious orientation in operation and curriculum. Eighty-six percent of all private school students attended schools with a religious orientation, while 14 percent were enrolled in nonsectarian private schools (table 3).

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[2] "Instructional level" was defined as follows: "elementary" was a school that had no grade higher than the 8th; "secondary" was a school that had no grade lower than the 7th; "combined elementary/secondary" was a school that had grades higher than the 8th and lower than the 7th; and "other schools" were those that provided only alternative (non-traditional) instruction, special education, or vocational/technical curricula.

Overall, 39 percent of all private schools were Catholic; 42 percent had a religious orientation other than Catholic,[3] and 19 percent were nonsectarian (no religious orientation). Enrollment was concentrated in Catholic schools, which accounted for 60 percent of total private school enrollment. Twenty-six percent of private school students were found in other religious schools and 14 percent in nonsectarian private schools.

Size

Private schools tended to have fewer students (mean enrollment 234) than public schools (mean enrollment 480): 16 percent enrolled fewer than 50 students, 34 percent enrolled between 50 and 149 students, 25 percent served between 150 and 299, 19 percent served between 300 and 599, and only 7 percent served 600 or more students (table 3).

Catholic schools tended to be significantly larger than other private schools with a mean enrollment of 363, compared with 142 in schools with religious orientations other than Catholic and 174 in nonsectarian private schools.

Mean enrollments for different levels of private schools ranged from 94 to 541. Private secondary schools were more than twice the size of elementary schools and combined elementary and secondary schools. The mean secondary school enrollment was 541, compared with 218 in elementary schools and 211 in combined schools. The mean enrollment in other specialized schools was 94.

The smallest mean enrollment was found among schools in operation 10 years or less. These schools reported a mean enrollment (105) which was less than half that of schools in operation 11 to 24 years (251) and those established 25 or more years ago (290).

Years of Operation

About half of all private schools had existed for 25 years or more in 1985-86 (table 3). The remaining half were about evenly divided between those in existence 10 years or less and those operating 11 to 24 years.

Sixty-two percent of all private school students attended schools that had been operating for 25 years or more. Twenty-six percent attended schools in operation between 11 and 24 years, while schools operating 10 years or less served only 11 percent of the private elementary and secondary school population.

Catholic schools tended to be the oldest: 87 percent of Catholic schools were established 25 or more years ago, compared with 31 percent of other religious schools and 29 percent of nonsectarian schools (not shown in tables).

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[3] Schools with a religious orientation other than Catholic represent many different denominations. However, the sample size for this study was too small to produce reliable, separate estimates for these denominations.

Elementary and secondary schools differed from combined schools in years of operation. Well over half of all private elementary and secondary schools had been in operation for 25 years or more (63 percent for each) compared with 22 percent of schools offering both elementary and secondary grades (not shown in tables).

Percent Minority Enrollment

Of all private schools, 39 percent reported minority enrollments of less than 5 percent; 22 percent reported that between 5 and 14 percent of their enrollment was minority; 11 percent reported 15-24 percent minority enrollment; 10 percent reported 25-49 percent minority enrollment; and 18 percent reported that 50 percent or more of their students were members of a minority group (table 3).

Mean Pupil to Teacher Ratio

A total of 404,000 teachers (full- and part-time) were employed by private schools in 1985-86 (table 4), and there were 355,000 full-time equivalent teachers. The mean pupil to teacher ratio, based upon the number of full-time equivalent teachers, was 17.

Differences in the pupil to teacher ratio were found among schools with different religious orientations. Catholic schools reported a mean pupil to teacher ratio two times that of nonsectarian private schools. A pupil to teacher ratio of 21 was found in Catholic schools, compared with 10 in nonsectarian schools and 15 in schools with religious orientations other than Catholic.

Differences were also found at various instructional levels. Elementary schools reported a mean pupil to teacher ratio of 20, while secondary schools averaged 17 pupils per teacher and combined schools averaged 13 pupils per teacher.

The mean pupil to teacher ratio in private schools was related to size, with smaller schools reporting lower ratios than their larger counterparts. This ratio varied from 10 in schools with fewer than 50 students to 20 in schools with 600 or more students. In general, schools with higher tuitions reported lower pupil to teacher ratios.

Tuition

Most private schools charged tuition, although 6 percent had no tuition fees (not shown in tables). Schools were asked to report the highest scheduled or published annual tuition charged for a full-time student, not including boarding fees, based upon the rate charged the first child in a family. These tuition rates were discounted by nine out of ten private schools for such reasons as the enrollment of additional students from the same family, financial need, or church membership. The following tuition rates were reported by private schools:

- 18 percent charged less than $500 (including those that charged no tuition);

- 26 percent charged $500 to $1,000;
- 25 percent charged $1,001 to $1,500;
- 14 percent charged $1,501 to $2,500; and
- 17 percent charged more than $2,500 (table 3).

The median tuition (including schools that charged no tuition) for 1985-86 was $1,100 (table 4). Nonsectarian schools had the highest median tuition--$2,900, compared with $800 in Catholic schools and $1,200 in other religious schools. Secondary and combined schools charged higher tuitions than elementary schools. The median tuition in secondary schools was $1,600, while the median tuition in combined schools was $1,300 and in elementary schools $900.

Availability of Programs and Services

Nine pupil programs and services were surveyed, including: remedial reading, remedial mathematics, programs for the handicapped, programs for the gifted and talented, vocational and technical programs, foreign languages, diagnostic services, bilingual education, and English as a second language.

Remedial reading was the most frequently available (69 percent) of these programs (table 5). Forty-six percent of private schools provided foreign language instruction; 51 percent, diagnostic services; and 53 percent, remedial mathematics. Gifted and talented programs were offered by 33 percent of private schools.

Programs and services provided least frequently were:

- Bilingual education (9 percent);
- English as a second language (12 percent);
- Vocational and technical programs (14 percent); and
- Programs for the handicapped (18 percent).

Catholic schools and nonsectarian schools were more likely to provide remedial reading, remedial mathematics, and diagnostic services than other religious schools. A greater proportion of nonsectarian schools offered foreign languages, vocational/technical programs, and programs for the handicapped.

Survey Methodology and Data Reliability

The tabulations are estimates from the 1985-86 Private School Study conducted by Westat, Inc. under contract with the Center for Education Statistics. Westat's Project Director was J. Michael Brick, and the Assistant Project Director was Lucinda Gray. Report preparation was coordinated by Elizabeth Farris; this bulletin was written by Sheila Carbrero-Heaviside. The CES Project Officer was Jeffrey Williams.

The study was a multi-stage probability sample of private schools across the United States done in conjunction with a survey of library and media centers. The first stage was the sampling of 75 areas, consisting of counties or groups of contiguous counties, with probabilities proportional to the square root of the population in the area. The second stage was the selection of schools within the sampled areas with probabilities proportional to the square root of enrollment. The third and final stage was the sampling of teachers within the sampled schools. The schools within the areas were drawn from lists of schools created in the same sample areas for the 1983 Private School Survey. Since the lists were not updated, schools established after 1983 were not generally eligible for sampling. The estimates for the 1985-86 study are valid for schools that were in existence in 1983.

Of the 1,700 private schools sampled, 313 schools were determined to be outside the scope of the survey. Many of these schools had either closed or only served children below the first grade level. In addition to this restriction, a school was not considered in-scope unless it had a school day of at least 4 hours, was in session for at least 160 days per year, was located in a place other than a private home, and was privately administered.

A total of 1,174 school questionnaires were obtained from the 1,387 in-scope schools, resulting in an overall response rate of 85 percent. The data were collected by mail with telephone followups to increase the response rates. The response rate was over 90 percent in Catholic schools and about 80 percent in all the other schools.

National estimates were constructed by weighting the responses to the questionnaire from the sample schools and teachers. Since the estimates in this report were obtained from a sample of schools, they are subject to sampling variability. An estimate of the magnitude of sampling variability is the coefficient of variation, which is the standard error of the estimate expressed as a percent of the estimate. The standard error of an estimate is a measure of the variability between the values of the estimate calculated from different samples and the value of the statistic in the population.

The interval from two standard errors below the estimate to two standard errors above the estimate includes the average of all possible samples in about 95 percent of all possible samples. This is called a 95 percent confidence interval. For example, the estimated number of private secondary schools is 2,400; its coefficient of variation is 7.2 percent; and the standard error is 170 (2,400 times .072). A 95 percent confidence interval for this statistic extends from 2,400 - 2(170) to 2,400 + 2(170), or from 2,100 to 2,700 schools.

Estimates of the standard errors for the estimates were computed using a balanced half sampling technique, known as balanced repeated replications. Some representative statistics and their estimated coefficients of variation are included in table 6.

Survey estimates are also subject to errors of reporting and errors made in the collection of the data. These errors, called nonsampling errors, can sometimes bias the data. While general sampling theory can be used to determine how to estimate the sampling variability of an estimate, nonsampling errors are not easy to measure and usually require either an experiment to be conducted as part of the data collection procedure or use of data external to the study. Such studies are part of an ongoing effort to quantify problems in the data and to correct data collection procedures to eliminate or minimize biases that may enter the estimates. Separate reports on sources and measures of nonsampling error will be issued.

Data Comparability

There are three sets of national estimates available for private school enrollment and number of schools:

1. Data from the 1985-86 CES private school survey obtained from the 1983-84 private school frame, unadjusted for growth,

2. Data from the 1985-86 CES private school survey obtained from the 1983-84 private school frame, adjusted for growth from 1983-84 to 1985-86, and

3. Enrollment estimates from the 1986 Current Population Survey (CPS), collected and published by the Bureau of the Census.

In addition, there are some estimates of enrollment and schools prepared by non-governmental associations for the schools they represent, e.g., estimates of the number of Catholic schools are available from the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA).

This publication presents only estimates from the first and second data sets listed above. The 1987 Digest of Education Statistics will present enrollment figures and estimates of number of schools that come from the second data set, adjusted for growth between 1983-84 and 1985-86. The Digest and other Center publications like the Condition of Education, 1986 Edition, also use the CPS figures. The CPS estimates are used primarily by the Center for its projections, since the CPS data represent a more uniform time series than the data collected by the Center.

Table 1.--Number of private schools, enrollment in private schools, and percent change since 1983-84, by school characteristics: United States, 1985-86

School characteristic	Number of schools			Enrollment (in thousands)		
	1983-84	1985-86[1]	Percent change	1983-84	1985-86[1]	Percent change
Total	27,700	28,000	1	5,715	5,557	-3
Orientation[2]						
Catholic	9,800	10,200	4	3,209	3,076	-4
Other religious	12,900	12,700	-1	1,694	1,595	-6
Nonsectarian	5,000	5,000	0	812	886	9
Type/level[3]						
Elementary	15,600	16,400	5	3,240	3,227	0
Secondary	2,600	2,600	-1	1,047	1,014	-3
Combined	5,200	5,600	7	1,130	1,035	-8
Other	4,200	3,300	-21	297	280	-6

[1]Data for 1985-86 are based on weighted survey data with an adjustment for assumed growth. Since the 1985-86 sample was drawn from the 1983-84 frame, it did not include any private schools that came into existance after 1983-84. Adjustments were made based on the annualized rate of growth of private schools between 1980-81 and 1983-84 (obtained in the 1983-84 survey of private schools).

[2]Orientation data for 1983-84 have been adjusted to conform to a definitional change in "religious orientation" in the 1985-86 survey.

[3]Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

NOTE.--Numbers of schools have been rounded to hundreds and enrollment has been rounded to thousands. Percent change was computed from unrounded data and then rounded to the nearest whole percent. Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Table 2.--Number of public and private schools and their enrollment, by instructional type/level: United States, 1985-86

Type/level[1]	Total		Public[2]		Private[3]	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
			Schools			
Total	110,300	100	82,400	100	28,000	100
Elementary	72,900	66	56,500	69	16,400	59
Secondary	24,200	22	21,600	26	2,600	9
Combined	7,400	7	1,800	2	5,600	20
Other	5,800	5	2,500	3	3,300	12
			Enrollment (in thousands)			
Total	45,072	100	39,515	100	5,557	100
Elementary	25,966	58	22,739	58	3,227	58
Secondary	16,605	37	15,591	39	1,014	18
Combined	1,852	4	817	2	1,035	19
Other	648	1	368	1	280	5

[1]Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

[2]U.S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics, Elementary and Secondary General Information Survey, Common Core of Data, 1985-86.

[3]Data are based on weighted survey data with an adjustment for assumed growth. Since the 1985-86 sample was drawn from the 1983-84 frame, it did not include any private schools that came into existence after 1983-84. Adjustment were made based on the annualized rate of growth of private schools between 1980-81 and 1983-84 (obtained in the 1983-84 survey of private schools).

NOTE.--Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Table 3.--Number of private schools, enrollment, and mean enrollment per school, by school characteristics: United States, 1985-86

School characteristic	Number of schools[1]		Enrollment[1] (in thousands)		Mean enrollment per school
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total	25,600	100	5,982	100	234
Orientation					
Catholic	9,900	39	3,599	60	363
Other religious	10,800	42	1,526	26	142
Nonsectarian	4,900	19	858	14	174
Type/level[2]					
Elementary	15,300	60	3,343	56	218
Secondary	2,400	10	1,318	22	541
Combined	4,900	19	1,047	17	211
Other	2,900	11	274	5	94
Size					
Less than 50	4,200	16	118	2	28
50 - 149	8,600	34	886	15	103
150 - 299	6,400	25	1,410	24	222
300 - 599	4,800	19	1,957	33	409
600 or more	1,700	7	1,611	27	936
Tuition[3]					
Less than $500	4,700	18	1,005	17	213
$500 - 1000	6,700	26	1,363	23	203
$1001 - 1500	6,300	25	1,613	27	255
$1501 - 2500	3,500	14	1,013	17	289
More than $2500	4,400	17	989	17	227
Years of operation					
10 or less	6,500	25	688	11	105
11 to 24	6,200	24	1,560	26	251
25 or more	12,900	50	3,734	62	290
Minority enrollment					
Less than 5 percent	10,000	39	2,330	39	234
5 to 14 percent	5,700	22	1,554	26	271
15 to 24 percent	2,700	11	603	10	221
25 to 49 percent	2,600	10	544	9	212
50 percent or more	4,600	18	951	16	206

[1]Data are based on weighted survey data without adjustment for assumed growth since 1983-84.

[2]Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

[3]Tuition data represent the highest scheduled or published tuition charged for a full-time student based on the rate charged the first child in the family. Nine out of 10 private schools discount these tuition rates for various reasons.

NOTE.--Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Table 4.--Number of teachers in private schools, mean pupil/teacher ratio, and median tuition, by school characteristics: United States, 1985-86

School characteristic	Full-and part-time teachers[1]		Mean pupil/ teacher ratio[2]	Median tuition[3]
	Number (in thousands)	Percent		
Total	404	100	17	1,100
Orientation				
Catholic	185	46	21	800
Other religious	127	31	15	1,200
Nonsectarian	92	23	10	2,900
Type/level[4]				
Elementary	190	47	20	900
Secondary	83	20	17	1,600
Combined	96	24	13	1,300
Other	35	9	9	1,900
Size				
Less than 50	17	4	10	900
50 - 149	91	23	12	1,300
150 - 299	95	24	17	1,000
300 - 599	118	29	18	1,100
600 or more	83	20	20	1,400
Tuition[3]				
Less than $500	55	14	18	200
$500 - 1000	75	18	21	800
$1001 - 1500	96	24	19	1,300
$1501 - 2500	69	17	17	1,900
More than $2500	110	27	11	3,600

[1]Principals' reports of the number of teachers on or about October 1, 1985.

[2]Based on number of students divided by number of full-time equivalent (F.T.E.) teachers.

[3]Tuition data represent the highest scheduled or published tuition charged for a full-time student based on the rate charged the first child in the family. Nine out of 10 private schools discount these tuition rates for various reasons.

[4]Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

NOTE.--Data are based on weighted survey data without adjustment for assumed growth since 1983-84. Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Table 5.--Percent of private schools offering various programs and services, by school characteristics: United States, 1985-86

Program/ service	Total	Orientation			Type/level*			
		Catholic	Other religious	Nonsectarian	Elementary	Secondary	Combined	Other
	Percent							
Bilingual education.....	9	4	11	12	8	8	15	3
English as a second language.....	12	9	14	14	9	23	17	10
Remedial reading.....	69	78	59	73	72	53	61	82
Remedial mathematics.....	53	61	42	62	52	46	50	71
Programs for the handicapped.....	18	15	16	30	14	11	20	42
Programs for the gifted and talented.....	33	37	28	37	32	50	32	24
Vocational/technical programs.....	14	8	15	26	6	35	22	32
Foreign languages.....	46	33	48	70	30	95	71	53
Diagnostic services.....	51	61	41	52	50	46	41	76

*Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

NOTE.--Data are based on weighted survey data without adjustment for assumed growth since 1983-84.

Table 6.--Coefficients of variation for selected items

Item	Estimate	Coefficient of variation
Number of private schools		
All schools	25,600	5.1
Catholic schools	9,900	5.5
Secondary schools	2,400	7.2
Schools charging more than $2,500 tuition	4,400	23.9
Number of pupils in		
All private schools	5,982,000	6.1
Other religious schools	1,526,000	9.4
Elementary schools	3,343,000	6.6
Schools charging $1,001 to $1,500 tuition	1,613,000	10.1
Number of teachers in		
All private schools	404,000	6.7
Nonsectarian schools	92,000	17.0
Combined schools	96,000	11.6
Schools charging $1,501 to $2,500 tuition	69,000	10.2
Percent of schools		
Other religious schools	42	6.8
Elementary schools	60	3.5
Schools with less than 50 pupils	16	13.4
Percent of pupils in		
Catholic schools	60	3.7
Secondary schools	22	7.1
Schools with 50-149 pupils	15	13.2
Percent of teachers in		
Nonsectarian schools	23	13.9
Combined schools	24	7.7
Schools with 300-599 pupils	29	10.7
Mean pupil per teacher ratio		
All private schools	17	4.5
Catholic schools	21	3.2
Secondary schools	17	6.2
Mean enrollment		
All schools	234	3.7
Other religious schools	142	5.7
Elementary schools	218	5.2